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Japan

Organic

MAFF Considering Labeling Certification for Organic Products 1998

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Report Highlights:

According to one press report, MAFF is getting closer to establishing a certification system for the labeling of organic products. While this will create a more level-playing field for U.S. exports of organic products to Japan, standards between the two countries will still have some differences.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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Below is an article that recently appeared in a national newspaper in Japan, regarding MAFF's movement towards setting unified organic labeling standards.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) will introduce a certification system for organic agricultural products. MAFF will draft the outlines of the system within this year and plans to implement it in the year 2000. More foods in supermarkets are being labeled as 'organic', responding to consumers' growing concerns about food safety. However, there are no unified standards, so often the labels are vague. The certification system will prohibit inappropriate labeling and sales of 'organic' foods which do not satisfy the standards. MAFF will utilize the JAS (Japan

Agricultural Standards) system in the certification system and will not allow 'organic' labeling on uncertified foods. MAFF will operate the system through local authorities, public organizations, or private testing organizations. MAFF formulated current guidelines for sales of organic agricultural products in 1992. The guidelines distinguish 'organic products' from other low- or non-chemically grown products, by defining them as 'the products grown on the fields free from agricultural chemicals and chemical fertilizers in the past three years.' --*Nikkei Shimbun article on July 7, 1998*

We expect that the certification system will halt the proliferation of "pseudo-organic" domestic products that have flooded Japanese supermarkets and restaurants. As no certification system currently exists, many products have been labeled as "yuki" or natural, leading consumers to believe that they are purchasing "healthy" products, often at higher prices. While some differences between Japanese and U.S. organic standards may not be fully resolved, we are hopeful that this action will create a more level playing field between U.S. and domestic organic products.